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ABSTRACT

Contemporary philosophy of education lacks direction, and needs it. The lack of direction is due to skepticism about the foundations of knowledge and values rampant in contemporary philosophy at large, both the Anglo-Saxon and Continental traditions. The remedy is grounded in a renewal of confidence about these foundations that is found in principles most convincingly and comprehensively set out in the philosophy of Bernard Lonergan. The principles of empiricism have largely been rejected because, when set out clearly and distinctly, they self-destruct. Lonergan's principles are vindicated not only by their applicability to a wide range of examples of getting to know, including some that have been a thorn in the side of empiricism; but also by virtue of the fact that their contradictories self-destruct. The business of education is above all to foster those mental capacities that are involved in getting to know what is true and what is good; the business of philosophy of education is to articulate the nature of these capacities, to show why they are at the foundations of the knowledge of fact and value, and to bring out what it is to enhance and apply them. (DB)

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A NEW DIRECTION FOR THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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A NEW DIRECTION FOR THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

In a recent address,[1] Professor Evelina Orteza remarked on a lack of direction in contemporary philosophy of education. I would like to outline briefly what I think are the reasons for this; and state, at rather greater length, how a new direction may be found.

To educate a person, I think it would be generally agreed, consists basically of two things--to impart to her knowledge, and the means of acquiring new knowledge, over a fairly wide area; and to put her in touch with humane values. As to the former, an educated person is certainly in possession of a considerable stock of facts, but these are not confined to just one field of knowledge or expertise. Someone who can give you details of all American professional boxing matches since 1936, who won and who lost, in which round and after how many minutes in the case of knockouts, is certainly a remarkable person, but does not ipso facto count as educated. Nor, for that matter, does the (English-speaking) Nobel-prize-winning physicist who cannot tell you the name of one Shakespeare play; or the Milton scholar who has never heard of Einstein or Bohr. As to humane values, we expect an educated person to appreciate a range of ways of life, and to be able to enjoy a certain variety of esteemed works of art. One who has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the natural and social sciences, is the less educated for being incapable of getting pleasure from baroque music or impressionist painting.

Given this account of education, then, as being a matter of the imparting of knowledge and of humane values, what is the reason for the present lack of direction in philosophy of education? Briefly, it is that recent philosophy has given rise to extreme scepticism about the foundations of both. If the nature of education is as I have suggested, there seems to be presupposed some conception of what counts as knowledge, and why; and of what is valuable, and why. But overall criteria of knowledge and value seem to be under attack in contemporary philosophy, both Anglo-Saxon and Continental. Philosophy of education will not find its direction until we can provide an account of what counts as knowledge, and of what is genuinely valuable, and why; in other words, an account of the foundations of knowledge and value.

The positivism which was in the ascendant a few decades ago had a clear account of these foundations. But these have appeared unduly narrow, and in any case have been generally abandoned owing to the internal contradictions of positivism. As to what is constitutive of humane value, there are as many conflicting opinions as there are ideologies. The conceptual analysis of "education," "knowledge" and related notions, as represented notably in the work of R.S. Peters,[2] while valuable so far as it goes, seems to offer little substantial guidance as to what in concrete fact education should be, and of what it should consist. Linguistic analysis can show us that it is of the essence of education to promote knowledge and the apprehension of value. But on what is actually constitutive of knowledge and value, it can take us no farther than the conventional attitudes enshrined in our linguistic practices. To go so far is definitely some gain; but in the welter of conflicting ideologies with which we are confronted (should we

educate for Buddhism or secularism, for communist or liberal values?), we have a desperate need to go further.

To this situation, the thought of Bernard Lonergan seems to me to have a great deal to contribute. It provides a point of view from which one can see some merit in the doctrines both of the positivists and their successors and opponents (for example, those influenced by deconstruction). Its basis can be hinted at by advertence to the following fact. Positivism is self-destructive, in that the statement of its doctrines is incompatible with the consequences of those doctrines (there is no sense experience by which one can verify or falsify the meaningful non-analytic proposition, that all meaningful non-analytic propositions may be verified or falsified in sense-experience). On Lonergan's account of knowledge, on the contrary, it is the contradictories of the basic theses which can be shown to be self-destructive in the manner of those of positivism. From the basic theses, a comprehensively critical account of human knowledge and of humane values, and hence of true education as promoting these, may be derived.

Hume said, in a famous passage, that generally speaking the errors in religion were dangerous, those in philosophy only ridiculous.[3] In my opinion, the anti-foundationalism which is prevalent in contemporary philosophy is an exception to this principle. I will try in what immediately follows to justify my belief that it is an error, and a dangerous one; and show how a version of foundationalism may be defended. In doing so, I shall be using the philosophical principles set out at length by Lonergan.

I believe that every conscious human being is a foundationalist exercite, if not signate, as the Scholastics would have put it. That is to say, people's practice commits them to foundationalism, even if their theory denies it. If I

ever make a statement at all, I seem more or less to be committed to the view that it is better founded than its contradictory; which is as much as to say, that it has foundations whereas its contradictory does not--or perhaps rather that it has foundations to a degree that its contradictory does not. If I were to say, "162547 is a prime number; but this statement is no better founded than the statement that it is not," I could hardly expect anyone to take me seriously. Similarly, you would hardly say, except by way of producing a philosophical example, "The professor of mechanical engineering is at present in her office; and the opinion that she is there is no better grounded than the opinion that she is not." I define "minimal foundationalism" as the doctrine that some statements are better founded, or have better foundations, than their contradictories, and so are more likely to be true.

I think it is quite easy to see that the denial of minimal foundationalism is self-destructive. Suppose I say, "It is not the case that any statement is better founded than its contradictory." If that statement itself is not better founded than its contradictory, there is no reason to take it seriously. But if it is better founded than its contradictory, it falsifies itself.

Someone might well say, that to be a minimal foundationalist is not to be committed to foundationalism in the sense intended by the influential caucus of contemporary philosophers which rejects that view. And it could hardly be claimed that minimal foundationalism of itself takes us very far. How, if at all, could we get any farther? Granted minimal foundationalism, one might ask what it is for any statement to be better founded than its contradictory. Of my two examples, one was mathematical, the other a matter of common-sense experience. Mathematicians can show whether or not 162547 is a prime number by methods of reasoning best known to themselves, as a

result of which it either turns out, or does not turn out, that this number is divisible without remainder by some integer other than 1 and itself. If it is, it is not a prime number; if it is not, it is. In the other case, the emphasis is more on experience than in the mathematical one; though it would be a mistake to suppose that appeal to reasoning is always inappropriate in such cases. The professor is usually in at this time of the day and week; her secretary saw her enter half an hour ago; and there was only a quarter of a minute since then during which the professor could have slipped out without his seeing her. Knocking on the door and hearing a sound as though of her voice, or opening the door and getting a glimpse of what appeared to be her seated at her desk, would generally be taken to clinch the matter. Of course, if there were reason subsequently to suspect that she had suborned a skilled actress to help her establish an alibi for a murder, the matter might deserve to be looked into further.

I have just given two examples of how statements can be shown to have better "foundations" than their contradictories. Can they be generalized? It seems to me that they can. I shall hazard a generalization, and then test it out on statements of different kinds. I suggest (following Lonergan) a statement is well-founded so far as the utterer or her authority (1) has attended to the relevant evidence, (2) has envisaged a number of alternative explanations, and (3) judges reasonably that her statement is that possibility which best accounts for the evidence. Why is the statement that water consists of hydrogen and oxygen better founded than its alternatives--for example, that water is itself a chemical element, or that it is a compound or mixture of other elements? Among the relevant empirical evidence is the fact that if you pass an electrical current through water, gas comes bubbling up

at the terminals, and the quantity of water gradually diminishes. The samples of gas obtained at each terminal respond to tests in observable ways (exploding when ignited; making a smouldering taper burst into flame) which are specific to hydrogen and oxygen. The range of possibilities is, that water is an element; that water is a compound (or mixture) of elements other than hydrogen and oxygen; and that water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen. The first possibility appears to be eliminated by the fact of the water being turned into two types of gas; the second by the samples of gas responding to tests in the manner that they do; which leaves us with the third.

This is as elementary an example in science as one could wish for; but the principle involved is applicable to much more sophisticated cases. When Rutherford bombarded a sheet of metal with particles, he was surprised to find that while most of the particles passed straight through the metal, a few ricocheted in different directions--as though someone were throwing a large number of balls in a random fashion at a coconut-shy, and the vast majority were going straight to the back, but a few were hitting coconuts and glancing sideways, or bounding back more or less towards the thrower. This confirmed the judgment which has been uniformly accepted by informed persons since that time; that each atom consists largely of empty space, with a tiny nucleus at the centre. To take another example, the meaning and implications of the general theory of relativity are obscure to many people, and certainly to me; but at least it is easy to see the point of the famous test of the theory carried out by Eddington. It follows from general relativity that rays of light are deflected in the neighbourhood of large objects. This should have as a consequence that the apparent positions of stars are

occasionally slightly different from what would otherwise be expected; for example, when their light passes close to the sun. Eddington's observations confirmed that this was so, and thus tended to support the general theory of relativity against its rivals. Once more we find the pattern--a range of envisaged possibilities, one of which is corroborated against the others by some crucial observable evidence.

I think it is quite easy to show that the same overall principles apply to other fields, like history, or the interpretation of documents. Did King Henry VIII of England have two of his wives beheaded? The available evidence (in documents and on monuments) confirms that he did, as against other possibilities (that Anne Boleyn died in childbed, or Catherine Howard at a ripe old age). Did Jane Austen intend to depict a posturing and pretentious woman in Mrs. Elton? Repeated reading of her text confirms the supposition that she did, as against the view, say, that Mrs. Elton embodies a standard to which the authoress felt that her heroine would have been better to conform. We now have a plausible, and I believe the correct, account, of what the foundations of knowledge are. Judgments are well-founded, and so tend to be true, so far as they have been attentively, intelligently, and reasonably[4] arrived at; where attentiveness is a matter of noting the relevant experience; intelligence a matter of envisaging possibilities; and reasonableness a matter of judging that that possibility is so which is best corroborated by the evidence.

I remarked above on the self-destructiveness of the judgment that no judgment is better founded than its contradictory. Having said something about the preconditions of well-founded judgment, we are now in a position to take this point rather further. You do not often hear lecturers beginning

their performances with such remarks as, "I have never attended to the evidence on any subject, and certainly not on the subject about which I am now going to enlighten my audience." Nor does one come across every day periodical articles which include an admission by the author that she has never been puzzled about a phenomenon, and subsequently come to understand or even to misunderstand it. And it is rather rare to find in a learned monograph such a sentence as, "I have never judged for sufficient reason that something is so or not so; if the reader thinks that I have ever marshalled evidence to determine which of two alternative hypotheses is liable to be true, she is quite mistaken." Explicitly to deny that one is, or has ever been, an attentive, intelligent, or reasonable person, is rather too obviously to disqualify oneself as a lecturer or as the author of an article or book. But there are and have been many influential philosophical and psychological theories which imply just such an admission or confession. In accordance with Skinnerian behaviorism or eliminative materialism, for example, we make all the judgements that we do entirely because of our history of positive reinforcement, or because of chemical and physical events within our brains. It is mere "mentalism," or "primitive folk psychology," to attribute anyone's judgements to attentiveness to relevant data, intelligence in envisaging possibilities, and reasonableness in judging that that possibility is so which does appear best to account for the evidence. In other words, it follows from Skinnerian behaviorism and eliminative materialism that neither the Skinnerian behaviorist nor the eliminative materialsit hold the theories that they do because there is good reason for them to do so. And consequently it is pointless to take them seriously.[5]

If these are the foundations of knowledge, and if they are so easily arrived at and articulated, why is it that so many philosophers deny that there are any foundations of knowledge at all? I believe that the main reason is that a particular erroneous, or at least excessively restricted, view of what the foundations of knowledge are, the empiricist one, has turned out to be false; and that people have sufficiently attended neither to the alternative possibilities, nor to the dire consequences of anti-foundationalist views. It has been characteristic of empiricism, ex officio, to stress the role of experience; it does justice, in other words, to that aspect of the foundations of knowledge which I have called "attentiveness." But it tries to reduce the mental qualities of intelligence and reasonableness to "logic" in a comparatively narrow sense. (Of course, if one intends 'logic' in a broad sense, to include whatever mental operations may be required to arrive at the truth about the world on the basis of experience, it is merely misleading, as opposed to positively erroneous, to claim that the truth about the world is to be obtained simply by the use of experience and logic.) However, it is now quite clear, if anything in philosophy is, that there is no strictly "logical" process by which one can move from any set of data to the scientific theory which they are supposed to verify. And even once theories have been arrived at, and deductions made from them, one still has to match the deductions from the theories with the observations supposed to corroborate or to falsify them, which again cannot be a matter of "logic" except in a very broad sense. It is not "knocking logic" to point out that, while logic enormously facilitates and refines the operations of intelligence and reasonableness, it can never replace them.

One objection to empiricism I believe to be unsound; if it were sound, it could also be urged against the principles that I have been putting forward. The notion that we can test our theories by confronting them with data presupposes, it is said, that we can apprehend data uncontaminated by theory; but this is impossible.[6] I answer that, although there is a broad sense of "theory" in which all talk of the data of experience is indeed contaminated by theory, this does not entail that one cannot articulate data in a manner sufficiently independent of scientific theories for the former to function as an adequate test of the latter. A person of little education A might confirm to an excited astronomer B the astronomer's impression that something seen through a telescope, or visible on a photograph, was a palpable disc rather than a mere point of light; or that it had moved relatively to neighbouring points of light over a number of days or weeks. A might thus be able to confirm to B that there <u>was</u> evidence for a previously unobserved asteroid; for all that she was incapable of appreciating it <u>as</u> such evidence. Similarly, a keen-eyed person uninstructed in ornithology might confirm or disconfirm a suggestion made to her by a trained ornithologist, that a small olive-green bird had a conspicuous eye-stripe; which could be evidence that a rare warbler was in the vicinity.

If my view is correct, empiricism is a fair first approximation to the correct foundations of knowledge; this is presumably why so many intelligent persons have been empiricists. In typical instances, after all, experience plays a crucial role in coming to know. It is plausible to say, I merely <u>believe</u> the professor of electrical engineering to be in her office, till I actually <u>see</u> or <u>hear</u> her there, when I <u>know</u> that she is. Even in mathematics, it is not wholly implausible to claim that the conclusions to which

one comes by reasoning are remotely related to experience; the counted pebbles and biscuits in the case of arithmetic, the roughly-drawn diagrams in geometry, may well have a role in bringing the mind to apprehend the correct conclusion, even if they do not have directly to be invoked in the justification of it. What is wrong with empiricism, on the view of foundations that I am defending here, is that it overrates the role of the first component of the threefold business (of being attentive, intelligent, and reasonable) at the expense of the second and the third; assuming, as someone has rather neatly expressed it, that "what is obvious in knowing is what knowing obviously is."[7]

One rather fundamental prima facie disadvantage of empiricism, as Hume effectively showed, is the doctrine of causality to which it inevitably leads; since we have no direct experience of the relation between cause and effect, we can have no ground for supposing that it is actually characteristic of the real world. But unfortunately, as Hume also points out, we need to assume the reality of the causal connection for our knowledge to extend any further than our direct experience or memory.[8] On the view of foundations suggested here, there is simply no difficulty about our knowledge of causes. I can perfectly well judge on sufficient grounds that a cold was caused by prolonged sitting in a damp spot, or a streak on a photographic plate was caused by an alpha particle, on the grounds that these suppositions seem to be confirmed by all the relevant phenomena, to a degree that none of the alternatives are.

Another notorious corollary of empiricism is that our knowledge of other minds appears to constitute an insurmountable problem. I cannot directly perceive the correspondence with what I am saying which are

running through the minds of those who are listening to me speaking; nor their feelings of irritation at my manner of delivery. However, I can perfectly well surmise that they disagree, or that they feel irritated; and their words that I hear or their gestures which I see may confirm this as more liable to be true than alternative possibilities. It may readily be seen that puzzles about the nature of our knowledge of the remote past may be resolved in just the same way. I cannot observe the violent death of Tiberius Gracchus, or the wholesale extermination of species that brought the Permian era to an end; but the judgment that Tiberius Gracchus met a violent death, and that vast numbers of species became extinct at the end of the Permian era, may be the best explanation to be had of evidence available here and now.

Fallibilism is perhaps an even better approximation than empiricism to the correct view of the foundations of knowledge. Now fallibilism is often taken to be intrinsically opposed to foundationalism;[8] but I think this is a mistake, for the following reason. What fallibilism amounts to (when it is anything more than, to quote Feyerabend's admirable phrase, a mere "verbal ornament")[9] is the doctrine that a judgment has verisimilitude, is worth taking seriously as a candidate for truth, so far as it is "corroborated;" that is to say, so far as it has survived strenuous attempts to falsify it in the light of the available evidence, and so far as it <u>might conceivably</u> have been thus falsified. But what happens when we apply the doctrine of fallibilism to itself?[10] It is not coherent to suppose, that the judgment that all judgments have verisimilitude so far as they are corroborated by experience, itself has verisimilitude because it is corroborated by experience. If it is to be justified at all, it seems it must be justified <u>a priori</u>, as itself having a kind

of certainty. This is indeed a rather paradoxical consequence; since it is apt to be claimed as one of the merits of fallibilism that it eschews just this kind of search for certainty. But it follows from the foundationalist principles which I have sketched that a qualified fallibilism, of a sort which does not have these paradoxical consequences, turns out to be true. One tends to get at the truth by ensuring that one's judgements have as adequate a foundation as possible; by being as attentive, intelligent and reasonable as one can. The world or reality can be nothing other than what true propositions are or would be about, and what well-founded propositions tend to be about. This much is a priori certain, in that one contradicts it only at the expense of being incoherent in the last analysis. In acquiring detailed knowledge of how the world is, one must be as "reasonable" as possible; and this consists in being constantly on the qui vive for hypotheses which explain the relevant phenomena better than those which one maintains here and now, and for evidence which would falsify the latter. To sum this matter up: fallibilism on one understanding is incoherent; on another is at least a close approximation to the kind of foundations that I am commending.

It may be seen that it is appropriate, on the basis of these principles, to accept, though in a qualified and conditional manner, the judgments of those we dignify by the name of scientists on the subjects in which they specialize. On matters of chemistry and biology, the communities of chemists and biologists have, over a long period of time, been collectively responsible for being as attentive, intelligent, and reasonable as possible; and there is no reason to suspect, as there is perhaps in the case of astrologers or theologians, that their procedures are flawed by some basic false assumption. We accept their deliverances as liable to be true about the world because, and

in so far as, we believe these mental attitudes to be characteristic of themselves and of those who have taught them. Someone might object to that it is merely the paradigm case of absurdity, for which further grounds for dismissal neither can nor need be given, not to accept the deliverances of scientists within their respective specialities. If nuclear physicists do not know about neutrinos, and chemists about potassium chloride, who does? Is not science the case par excellence of justified belief? But the fact is that there is a concealed normativity, not to say something honorific, in calling a set of doctrines a science, or a person professionally concerned with maintaining or promulgating them a scientist. One may ask, what makes a science a science, or a scientist a scientist? It seems all very well to say that you just have to follow the physicist's authority in physics, the zoologist's in matters of zoology; until you are asked why you are not equally to defer to the astrologer's authority in matters of astrology, the witch-doctor's authority in matters of witch doctrine. Sure enough, the most intellectually prestigious within our own society would not accept the authority of the astrologer or witch-doctor; but given the undoubted fact that matters have been very different in other places and at other times, the question can hardly be avoided of what gives the authorities of our own place and time a unique privilege in respect to knowledge of the actual nature of things. Either we defer to our authorities unconditionally; or we defer to them on the understanding that they have on the whole been pursuing the right method for gaining the truth about the world. And any spelling-out of such a method is a spelling-out of alleged foundations of knowledge.

It would be ridiculous to claim that authority has no place in knowledge; no person can test for herself any more than a tiny fraction of what she can

reasonably be said to know. (Does not the reader know that Tasmania is an island? Yet has she tested this for herself?) But it is one thing to admit that we have to submit to authorities; another to concede that we have to submit to them unconditionally. To do so unconditionally is to lay ourselves open to any socially-privileged error, imposture or fraud. To do so conditionally, if the conditions are not arbitrary, is to do so on the assumption that the authorities have foundations for what they claim; and presumably to believe in such foundations is to be a foundationalist. This is why I maintain that the prevalence of anti-foundationalism is dangerous; a consistent anti-foundationalist--one who is such in practice rather than merely in theory--is open to any set of convictions, however absurd or frightful, from which he is not rescued by his prejudices. After all, on his own admission, he has no foundation for his rejection of them.

Few people, in the matter of belief, are willing to go through with abandonment of what I have called minimal foundationalism, from which abandonment it is indeed directly to be inferred that "anything goes." In order to avoid this conclusion, philosophers are apt to resort to some kind of what I shall call quasi-foundations. Quasi-foundations, to misquote the apostle Paul, are foundations which one has as though one had them not.[11] I have no space to deal with any type of quasi-foundations in detail, but some brief comment on some salient examples ought to be made. The function of quasi-foundations is to make their proponents feel that they can avoid foundationalism, without being committed to the obviously bizarre consequences of the conclusion that "anything goes." It appears to me that all forms of quasi-foundationalism, when clarified, turn out to be plainly inadequate, to be unworkably vague, or to amount to real foundations after

all. Three instances of quasi-foundations may be surveyed by way of example--conventionalism, coherentism, and pragmatism.

Evidently, the conventions of our society, or of our particular enclave within our society, do constrain us in such a way that we cannot believe just anything. But if what is in question is true beliefs about the world, why should the conventions of our society or group be any more worthy of acceptance than those of any other society or group? And what are we to conclude on matters about which the different groups within our society, or the different sub-groups within our group, impose different conventions of belief? Am I, perhaps, to change my beliefs on, say, theological matters, every time I go back and forth between the local Mormon Tabernacle and the local philosophy department? It would be quite wrong to say, of course, that conventionalism has absolutely nothing going for it on the view of foundations which I outlined earlier. My society or group is liable to have arrived at its beliefs at least to some extent as a result of being attentive, intelligent, and reasonable; it would thus hardly be attentive, intelligent and reasonable in me to conclude that they were wholly erroneous. In general, it is a good tip to treat quasi-foundationalist views rather as Aristotle and Hegel treated the philosophical opinions of their predecessors--for all their inadequacies and errors, at least as having something significant to contribute to the attainment of truth about the matter.[12]

As for coherentism, its implausibility is most palpable if it is taken to involve merely coherence between propositions. If a set of propositions is internally coherent, the set of their contradictories is equally so. Furthermore, when conflict within a set of propositions does arise, one needs to have some further criterion in accordance with which one of the conflicting

subsets is to be retained, the other rejected. Why should not room be made within the system for the assumption of Muhammad, or the universal compassion of the Buddha, with just as much right as for Boyle's Law or the presence of a breeding-population of King Eiders in Greenland? Exclusion of some of these beliefs, as opposed to others, is either arbitrary, or based on principle. If the principle is non-arbitrary, it is either based on foundations, or itself foundational.

It is of the essence of coherentism to reject the obvious solution to its difficulties--that, at least in the case of some "basic" or "foundational" propositions, one should not try to assess their coherence with other propositions, but attend instead to their correspondence with the data of observation. Yet in this respect coherentism goes against much of what appears to be our actual practice in verifying and falsifying beliefs. If I want to know whether or not the wall of my neighbour's living-room is painted a bright shade of magenta, I do not work out how far the proposition that it is so or that it is not so fits in with the rest of what I believe; I go and look. At this point appeal might be made to a wider version of coherentism; what is at issue is not mere coherence within a set of propositions, but coherence within a whole set of social practices. But as so conceived coherentism is quite vague and unworkable as a criterion for particular beliefs, and of course is apt to come out with very different results as between one ideological group and another. And so far as it works effectively at all, it is extremely conservative in tendency; it always provides prima facie grounds for eliminating unpopular or novel beliefs. In this case as in the last, it should be noted that coherentism is not to be rejected root and branch and without qualification; one of the most important criteria for

the truth or verisimilitude of any judgement is, to be sure, whether it is consistent with other judgments acknowledged to be true or to have verisimilitude.[13]

Coherentism is sometimes eked out by pragmatism;[14] what is to be sought for is coherence in relation to a set of successful social practices. This certainly meets the objection already raised to a coherentism supposed to apply to propositions alone. It may be felt also somewhat to extenuate the conservative bias attributable to coherentism, since the propositions which encourage or are embodied in unsuccessful practices are to be modified or replaced. It does indeed say a great deal for the truth of Newtonian physical theory (or at least some close approximation to it) that we can use it successfully to land human beings on the moon and bring them back to earth. But, to take a different kind of example, it may be very practical indeed for Caucasian males to believe that they and they alone have intellectual and moral qualities which fit them to govern the rest of humankind. And it is notorious that false beliefs about the depravity of one's enemy do a great deal to galvanize national effort in the prosecution of a war. It is liable to be objected, of course, that the sort of pragmatism which would be vulnerable to such counter-examples would be pragmatism of a very "crude" kind. But it is by no means clear how one can dispense with crudity in this matter except at the expense of vagueness or inconsistency. And the proponent of any kind of pragmatism which was supposed to meet the objection would owe us an account of just which kinds of successful practice would supply a proper basis for belief, and why. But "proper basis" is just a synonym for "foundation."

I should like, by way of conclusion to this discussion of foundations, to refer to a recent attack on foundationalism by Kai Nielsen.[15] "Foundationalism," writes Nielsen, "is a philosophical attempt which seeks to isolate, by some kind of philosophical method, a set of basic beliefs which are foundational for all the rest of the things that we may reasonably claim to know or reasonably believe. Classical foundationalism holds that the only properly basic beliefs are those that are self-evident, incorrigible reports of experience or are evident to the senses. On such an account, other beliefs can be rationally held only if they are supported either deductively or inductively by such properly basic beliefs."[16] Now on the account which I have given it is a series of assumptions, which, though virtually universal among humankind, seldom reach the level of formulation into explicit beliefs, that are properly basic. It is one thing to be attentive, intelligent and reasonable in the senses sketched earlier in this paper; it is another thing to set out clearly and distinctly just what it is to be so. It is these three mental operations which are the foundations of knowledge; that is, of grounded true belief. In spite of what has been claimed by a large number of contemporary philosophers, the epistemological tradition in philosophy, from Descartes up to Husserl and Russell, was quite correct in trying to state clearly the nature of these foundations, and to justify them as such.[17]

Inference to the best explanation from the evidence available to the senses involves what is usually called "induction" as well as deduction; so I suppose that the reasoning by which one builds upon the foundation may not improperly be said to be both inductive and deductive. At all events, one has both to hazard explanations, and to work out their consequences.[18] The philosophical method by which one may isolate the basic beliefs, or rather by

which one may turn the basic assumptions into articulate convictions, is such as I have already described.

The Achilles heel of what Nielsen calls classical foundationalism, as he well brings out, is that it is self-refuting. "The very proposition asserting what classical foundationalism is, on the one hand, neither self-evident, evident to the senses or an incorrigible report of experience, nor, on the other, deducible from such propositions or inductively justified by them. In fine, classical foundationalism hoists itself by its own petard."[19] Does this objection apply to the alternative form of foundationalism that I have put forward? (One might call it "pre-classical," as it seems to have been adumbrated in arguments of Aristotle and Aquinas.[20]) It does not. On the contrary, it is its contradictory which is self-refuting. Suppose someone denies that one tends to get at the truth about things by attending to evidence, by envisaging possibilities that might account for that evidence, and by affirming that possibility which is best corroborated by it. Either she is prepared to support her denial as the best way of accounting for the relevant evidence, or she is not. If she is not, then it seems pointless to take her denial seriously. If she is, she is tacitly committing herself to the very position she is explicitly denying, that one tends to get at the truth about things in the manner just described.

I have left little space for the foundations of value, having given pride of place to the foundations of factual knowledge. In general, the same principles apply. We have very general notions of what it is to lead a happy and satisfying life, and of what it is to lead a miserable and frustrating one; and we all assume as a matter of course, whatever philosophers may say when they are wearing their professional hats, that in general it is morally good to

promote the first kind of life and to resist promoting the second, for others as well as ourselves. (The fact that by way of exception, when the demands of happiness conflict with those of justice for example, the best action may not be the one that maximizes happiness, does not affect the issue.[21] Nor does the fact that the means to happiness for anyone differ considerably according to her economic, cultural and social milieu; or that an important aspect of happiness is the power to determine one's own road to happiness). The greater one's awareness of the possibilities of human life (an awareness fostered above all perhaps through the study of literature), the less on the whole one will be inclined to block their realization in oneself and others; such are the uses of humane education, Bildung as Gadamer would call it. On the whole, we act and are the better for being as attentive, intelligent and reasonable as possible with regard to value, to what contributes to human fulfilment and otherwise; and badness is largely a matter of restricting our consciousness on the matter.[22]

So what do we conclude?

1. Contemporary philosophy of education lacks direction, and needs it.
2. The lack of direction is due to the scepticism about the foundations of knowledge and value which are rampant in contemporary philosophy at large, both Anglo-Saxon and Continental.
3. The remedy is in a renewal of confidence about these foundations, which is to be found, if I am correct, by principles most convincingly and comprehensively set out in the philosophy of Bernard Lonergan.
4. The principles of empiricism have largely been rejected because, when set out clearly and distinctly, they self-destruct; Lonergan's principles are vindicated not only by their applicability to a very wide range of

types of example of getting to know, including some which have always been a thorn in the side of empiricism, but by virtue of the fact that their contradictories self-destruct.

5. The business of education is above all to foster those mental capacities which are involved in getting to know what is true and what is good; the business of philosophy of education is to articulate the nature of these capacities, to show why they are at the foundations of the knowledge of fact and value, and to bring out what it is to enhance and apply them.

NOTES

[1] In her Presidential Address to the Far Western Society for the Philosophy of Education, at Calgary in December 1988.

[2] Cf. R.S. Peters, Ethics and Education (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966).

[3] David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, Book 1, Part IV, Section VII.

[4] The terminology is due to Bernard Lonergan, Method in Theology (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972), 20, 53, 55, 231-2.

[5] Cf. T.S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolution (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962) 7, 125-6; P.K. Feyerabend, Against Method (London: New Left Books, 1975), 19, 38-9.

[6] Lonergan, Insight. A Study of Human Understanding (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1957), 416.

[7] Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section IV; Section V, Part 1.

[8] Cf. K.R. Popper, Objective Knowledge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972),33-4, 37, 42, 63.

[9] "Consolations for the Specialist," in Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, ed. I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 218.

[10] See Feyerabend, "Consolations for the Specialist," 216.

[11] 1 Corinthians 7:29-30.

[12] It might be said that T.S. Kuhn argues for conventionalism during periods of "normal" science, when a "paradigm" is thoroughly established; and anarchy during times of "revolutionary" science, when the "paradigm" is in dispute. See Kuhn, op. cit.

[13] A very skilful and informed defence of coherentism is to be had in Jonathan Dancy, Contemporary Epistemology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

[14] This seems in effect to be the strategy of Richard Rorty in Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[15] Kai Nielsen, "Philosophy as Critical Theory" (Invited Panel: The Future of Philosophy; Sixty-First Annual Pacific Division Meeting, San Francisco, California, March 27th, 1987).

[16] Nielsen, op. cit., 92.

[17] This is the thesis which is primarily under attack by Richard Rorty, op. cit.

[18] On the problematic nature of the notion of "induction," cf. Popper, op. cit., chapter 1.

[19] Nielsen, loc. cit.

[20] See Lonergan, A Second Collection (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974), 53.

[21] That "good" cannot be strictly defined in terms of contribution to happiness, or indeed in terms of anything else, is what primarily led to the vogue of "emotivism" and "prescriptivism," where value-judgments amount to expressions of emotion, or attempts to impose attitudes on others. Cf. H. Meynell, Freud, Marx and Morals (London: Macmillans, 1981), chapter 6.

[22] For more discussion, see Lonergan, Insight, chapters VI, VII and XVIII; Method, chapter 2.